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OR,

THE CASTLE OF ST. ALDOBRAND.

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Printed by W. CLOWES,
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A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

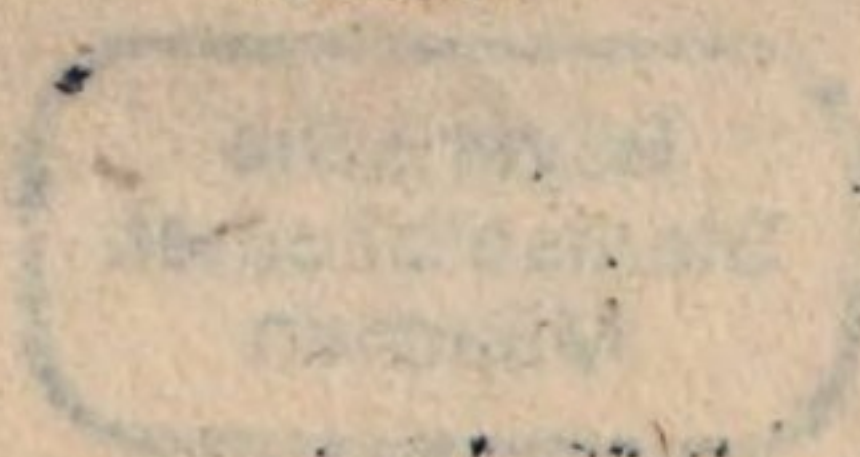
BY

THE REV. R. C. MATURIN.

London:

PRINTED FOR JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1816.



BELFRAV M.

OR

THE CASTLE OF ST. ALDOBRAND

A TRAGEDY

IN FIVE ACTS

BY

THE REV. H. C. MASON

LONDON :

PRINTED BY JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1831

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

PREFACE.

IN the Absence of the Author of this Tragedy the Editor cannot print this edition, which the curiosity of the Public has necessarily rendered a hasty one, without acknowledging in the Author's name, the claims which the Performers and Managers of Drury Lane Theatre have upon his attention.

To those who have witnessed the exertion of Mr. Kean's talents in the finest characters of the Drama, it is unnecessary to say, he in this Tragedy had opportunities, of which the Public rapturously testified how well he knew to avail himself.

It were to neglect a positive duty not to pay here a tribute to the performance of the part of Imogene by a Young Lady, who will find it a noble, perhaps an arduous task, to realize all the expectations which her successful debüt has excited.

To Mr. Holland, Mr. Pope, Miss Boyce, and the other Gentlemen and Ladies who performed it, as well as to Mr. T. Cooke the Composer of some very effective Music introduced into the Play, the Author's thanks are eminently due.

Several Lines and Speeches which are omitted in Representation, are here inserted. Material omissions however are marked by inverted commas.

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ST. ALDOBRAND Mr. POPE.
BERTRAM..... Mr. KEAN.
PRIOR of ST. ANSELM..... Mr. HOLLAND.
1st MONK Mr. POWELL.
2d MONK..... Mr. R. PHILLIPS
3d MONK..... Mr. BARNARD.
1st ROBBER Mr. KENT.
2d ROBBER..... Mr. COOKE.
HUGO Mr. CARR.
PIETRO Mr. COVENEY.
PAGE Miss CARR.
CHILD Miss J. CARR.

IMOGINE Miss SOMERVILLE.
CLOTILDA..... Miss BOYCE.
TERESA..... Miss COOKE.

Knights, Monks, Soldiers, Banditti, &c. &c. &c.

BERTIN M.

1811

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A. THOMAS

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BRYHAM Mr. Kean
PRIOR of ST. ANSELM Mr. Holland
1st MONK Mr. Pownall
2d MONK Mr. R. Pailley
3d MONK Mr. Barnard
1st ROBBIN Mr. Kent
2d ROBBIN Mr. Cooke
BUGG Mr. Carr
PIETRO Mr. Courtney
PAGE Miss Carr
CHILD Miss J. Carr

IMOGINE Miss Sonneviller
CLOTILDA Miss Boyce
TERESA Miss Cooke

Knight, Monks, Soldiers, Bandits, &c. &c.

PROLOGUE,

Written by J. Hobhouse, Esq.

SPOKEN BY MR. RAE.

TAUGHT by your judgment, by your favour led,
The grateful Stage restored her mighty dead.
But not, when wits of ages past revive,
Should living genius therefore cease to thrive.
No ! the same liberal zeal that fondly tries
To save the Poet, though the mortal dies,
Impartial welcomes each illustrious birth,
And, justly crowns contemporary worth.

This night a Bard, who yet, alas ! has known
Of conscious merit but the pangs alone ;
Through dark misfortune's gloom condemned to cope
With baffled effort and with blighted hope,
Still dares to think one friendly voice shall cheer
His sinking soul, and thinks to hail it—*here !*
Fanned by the breath of praise, his spark of fame
Still, still may glow, and burst into a flame.

Nor yet let British candour mock the toil
That rear'd the laurel on our sister soil ;
That soil to Fancy's gay luxuriance kind,
That soil which teems with each aspiring mind,
Rich in the fruits of glory's ripening sun—
Nurse of the brave—the land of WELLINGTON.

PROLOGUE.

Here, too, this night—another candidate,
Aspires to please; and trembles for her fate;—
And, as the flower whose ever-constant gaze
Turns to her sun and woos the genial blaze,
To those kind eyes our blushing suppliant bends,
And courts the light that beams from smiling friends;
Oh! calm the conflict of her hopes and fears,
Nor stain her cheek with more than mimic tears.

Since, then, alike each bold adventurer sues
The votary, and the handmaid of the Muse,
Think that the same neglect—the same regard,
Must sink, or save, the actress, and the bard.

BERTRAM;

OR,

THE CASTLE OF ST. ALDOBRAND.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Night, a Gallery in a Convent, a large Gothic window in the extremity, through which lightning is seen flashing. Two Monks enter in terror.

1st Monk. Heaven for its mercy!—what a night is here—

Oh! didst thou hear that peal?

2d. Monk. The dead must hear it.—(*A pause—thunder*). Speak! speak, and let me hear a human voice.

1st Monk. While the dark terror hurtled distantly,
Lapt in the skirts of the advancing clouds,
I cower'd with head full low upon my pallet,
And deem'd that I might sleep—till the strong light
Did, clear as noon day, shew each object round me.
Relic, and rosary, and crucifix,
Did rock and quiver in the bickering glare—
Then forth I rushed in agony of fear.

2d Monk. Among the tombed tenants of the
cloister

I walked and told my beads,
But, by the momentarily gleams of sheeted blue,
Did the pale marbles glare so sternly on me
I almost deemed they lived, and fled in horror.

1st Monk. There is much comfort in a holy man
In such an hour as this. [*Knocking at a door.*]
Ho, wake thee, prior.

2d Monk. Oh! come forth, holy prior, and pray
for us.

Enter the Prior.

Prior. All peace be with you!—'tis a fearful hour.

1st Monk. Hath memory a parallel to this?

2d Monk. How hast thou fared in this most awful
time?

Prior. As one whom fear did not make pitiless:
I bowed me at the cross for those whose heads
Are naked to the visiting blasts of Heav'n
In this its hour of wrath—
For the lone traveller on the hill of storms,
For the tossed shipman on the perilous deep;
Till the last peal that thundered o'er mine head
Did force a cry of—mercy for myself.

1st Monk. (Eagerly) Think'st thou these rock-
based turrets will abide?

2d Monk. Think'st thou they will not topple o'er
our heads?

Prior. The hand of Him who rules the storm, is
o'er us.

1st Monk. Oh, holy prior, this is no earthly storm.
The strife of fiends is on the battling clouds,
The glare of hell is in these sulphurous lightnings,—
This is no earthly storm.

Prior. Peace, peace—thou rash and unadvised
man ;

Oh ! add not to this night of nature's horrors
The darker shadowing of thy wicked fears.
The hand of Heaven, not man, is dealing with us,
And thoughts like thine do make it deal thus sternly.

Enter a Monk pale and breathless.

Prior. Speak, thou hast something seen.

3d Monk.———A fearful sight.

Prior. What hast thou seen ?

3d Monk. ———A piteous, fearful sight—
A noble vessel labouring with the storm
Hath struck upon the rocks beneath our walls,
And by the quivering gleams of livid blue
Her deck is crowded with despairing souls,
And in the hollow pauses of the storm
We heard their perishing cries—

Prior. Now haste ye forth,
Haste all—

3d Monk. It cannot be, it is too late ;
For many a fathom doth the beetling rock
Rise o'er the breaker's surge that dashes o'er them,—
No help of human hand can reach them there—
One hour will hush their cries—and by the morn
Thou wilt behold the ruin—wreck and corse
Float on the weltering wave.

Prior. Almighty power,
 Can nought be done? All things are possible—
 Wave high your torches on each crag and cliff—
 Let many lights blaze on our battlements—
 Shout to them in the pauses of the storm,
 And tell them there is hope—
 And let our deep-toned bell its loudest peal
 Send cheerly o'er the deep—
 'Twill be a comfort to the wretched souls
 In their extremity—All things are possible;
 Fresh hope may give them strength, and strength de-
 liverance—
 I'll hie me forth with you.

3d Monk. Wilt thou go forth—
 Hardly the vigorous step of daring youth
 May hold its footing on those wave-washed crags:
 And how wilt thou abide?

1st Monk. 'Tis tempting Heaven.—

Prior. To succour man, not tempt my God, I go;
 He will protect his servant.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Rocks—The Sea—A Storm—The Convent illuminated in the back ground—The Bell tolls at intervals—A groupe of Monks on the rocks with torches—A Vessel in distress in the Offing.

Enter the Prior and Monks below.

Prior. (*Clasping his hands*). Holy St. Anselm—
 what a sight is here!

1st Monk. Pray for their souls—their earthly part
is doomed—

Prior. Oh! that a prayer could hush the ele-
ments!—

Hold, I do espy a hope, a blessed hope—
That wave hath heaved her from the rock she struck on.
Lo, every arm on board is plied for safety—
Now, all the saints to speed.—

1st Monk. No saint doth hear.
Lo, the recoiling surge drives fiercely o'er her—
In, holy prior, or ere their drowning shriek
Do rive the sense; in, in, and tell thy beads—

Prior. I will not in, while to that hopeless wreck
One arm doth cling; while o'er the roaring waste
One voice be raised for help—I will not hence.

Monks above.

She sinks—she sinks—Oh hour of woe and horror!
[*The Vessel sinks—The Prior falls into the arms of
the Monks. The Scene shuts.*]

SCENE III.

The Gallery.

Enter the first Monk and the Prior.

1st Monk. Now rest you, holy prior, you are much
moved—

Prior. (*not heeding him*)—All, all did perish—

1st Monk. Change those drenched weeds—

Prior. I wist not of them—every soul did perish—

Enter 3d Monk hastily.

3d Monk. No, there was one did battle with the storm

With careless, desperate force ; full many times
His life was won and lost, as though he recked not—
No hand did aid him, and he aided none—
Alone he breasted the broad wave, alone
That man was saved——

Prior. Where is he? lead him hither.

[The stranger is led in by Monks.]

Prior. Raise to St. Anselm, thou redeemed soul,
Raise high thy living voice in prayer and praise ;
For wondrous hath his mercy been to thee—

2d Monk. He hath not spoken yet—

Stranger. Who are those round me?
Where am I?

Prior. On the shore of Sicily—
The convent of St. Anselm this is called—
Near is the castle of Lord Aldobrand—
A name far known, if, as thy speech imports,
Thou'rt of Italian birth—

(At the name of Aldobrand, the Stranger makes an effort to break from the Monks, but falls through weakness.)

Prior. Tell us thy name, sad man—

Stranger. A man of woe—

Prior. What is thy woe, that Christian love may
heal it—

Hast thou upon the pitiless waters lost
Brother, or sire, or son? did she thou lovest

Sink in thy straining sight!—
Or have the hoardings of thy worldly thrift
Been lost with yonder wreck?—

[To these questions the Stranger gives signs of dissent.]

Prior. Why dost thou then despond?

Stranger. Because I live—

Prior. Look not so wild—can we do aught for
thee?

Stranger. Yes, plunge me in the waves from which
ye snatched me;

So will the sin be on your souls, not mine—

Prior. I'll question not with him—his brain is
wrecked—

For ever in the pauses of his speech
His lip doth work with inward mutterings,
And his fixed eye is rivetted fearfully
On something that no other sight can spy.
Food and rest will restore him—lead him in—

Stranger. (*dashing off the monks as they approach*)

Off—ye are men—there's poison in your touch,—

[Sinking back.]

But I must yield, for this hath left me strengthless.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.

A Hall in the Castle of Aldobrand.

Enter Pietro and Teresa meeting.

Piet. Hah! Teresa waking! Was ever such a tempest?

Teres. The Lady Imogine would watch all night.—
And I have tended on her. What roused thee?

Piet. Would you could tell me what would give me sleep in such a night. I know of but one remedy for fear and wakefulness; that is a flaggon of wine. I hoped the thunder would have waked old Hugo to open the cellar-door for me.

Teres. He hath left his bed. E'en now I passed
him
Measuring the banquet-hall with restless steps
And moody fretful gestures. He approaches.

Enter Hugo.

Piet. Hugo, well met. Does e'en thy age bear memory of so terrible a storm?

Hug. They have been frequent lately.

Piet. They are ever so in Sicily.

Hug. So it is said. But storms when I was young
Would still pass o'er like Nature's fitful fevers
And render'd all more wholesome. Now their rage
Sent thus unseasonable and profitless
Speaks like the threats of Heaven.

Teres. Heaven grant its wrath visit not my kind
Lady!

Hug. Heaven grant, Teresa.
She may be still as happy in these halls,
As when she tripp'd the green a rural maid
And caroll'd light of heart—ere her good father's ruin;
Or our Lord saw and loved her!

Piet. See, if Madam Clotilda be not roused.

Teres. I'm glad, for she's our lady's loved com-
panion
And most esteemed attendant.

Enter Clotilda.

Clot. Is the Lady Imogine risen?

Teres. She hath not rested through the night.
Long ere the storm arose, her restless gestures
Forbade all hope to see her bless'd with sleep.

Clot. Since her lord's absence it is ever thus.
But soon he will return to his loved home,
And the gay knights and noble wassailers
Banish her lonely melancholy.

(Horn heard without.)

Monk. (without). What, ho.

Hug. There's some one at the gate.
My fears presage unwelcome messengers
At such untimely hours.

Clot. Attend the summons, Hugo.
I seek the Lady Imogine. If 'tis aught
Concerns her or our Lord, follow me thither.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.

A Gothic Apartment. Imogene discovered sitting at a Table, looking at a Picture.

Imo. Yes,
The limner's art may trace the absent feature,
And give the eye of distant weeping faith
To view the form of its idolatry;
But oh! the scenes 'mid which they met and parted—
The thoughts, the recollections sweet and bitter—
Th' Elysian dreams of lovers, when they loved—
Who shall restore them?
Less lovely are the fugitive clouds of eve,
And not more vanishing—if thou couldst speak,
Dumb witness of the secret soul of Imogene,
Thou might'st acquit the faith of womankind—
Since thou wast on my midnight pillow laid
Friend hath forsaken friend—the brotherly tie
Been lightly loosed—the parted coldly met—
Yea, mothers have with desperate hands wrought
harm
To little lives from their own bosoms lent.
But woman still hath loved—if that indeed
Woman e'er loved like me.

Enter Clotilda.

Clot. The storm seems hushed—wilt thou to rest,
Lady?

Imo. I feel no lack of rest—

Clot. Then let us stay—

And watch the last peal murmuring on the blast.
I will sit by the while, so thou wilt tell
Some pleasant story to beguile the time.

Imo. I am not in the mood.

Clot. I pray thee, tell me of some shadowy thing
Crossing the traveller on his path of fear
On such a night as this—

Or shipwrecked seamen clinging to a crag
From which some hand of darkness pushes him.

Imo. Thou simple maid—
Thus to enslave thy heart to foolish fears.

Clot. Far less I deem of peril is in such
Than in those tales women most love to list to,
The tales of love—for they are all untrue.

Imo. Lightly thou say'st that woman's love is false,
The thought is falser far—

For some of them are true as martyr's legends,
As full of suffering faith, of burning love,
Of high devotion—worthier heaven than earth—
Oh, I do know a tale.

Clot. Of knight or lady?

Imo. Of one who loved—She was of humble birth
Yet dared to love a proud and noble youth.
His sovereign's smile was on him—glory blazed
Around his path—yet did he smile on her—
Oh then, what visions were that blessed one's!
His sovereign's frown came next—
Then bowed the banners on his crested walls
Torn by the enemies' hand from their proud height,
Where twice two hundred years they mocked the
storm.

The stranger's step profaned his desolate halls,
An exiled outcast, houseless, nameless, abject,
He fled for life, and scarce by flight did save it.
No hoary beadsman bid his parting step
God speed—No faithful vassal followed him;
For fear had withered every heart but hers,
Who amid shame and ruin lov'd him better.

Clot. Did she partake his lot?

Imo. She burned to do it,
But 'twas forbidden.

Clot. How proved she then her love?

Imo. Was it not love to pine her youth away?
In her lone bower she sat all day to hearken
For tales of him, and—soon came tales of woe.
High glory lost he recked not what was saved—
With desperate men in desperate ways he dealt—
A change came o'er his nature and his heart
Till she that bore him had recoiled from him,
Nor know the alien visage of her child.
Yet still she loved, yea, still loved hopeless on.

Clot. Hapless lady! What hath befallen her?

Imo. Full many a miserable year hath past—
She knows him as one dead, or worse than dead;
And many a change her varied life hath known,
But her heart none.

In the lone hour of tempest and of terror
Her soul was on the dark hill's side with Bertram,
Yea, when the launched bolt did sear her sense
Her soul's deep orisons were breathed for him.
Was this not love? yea, thus doth woman love.

Clot. I would I had beheld their happier hours,

Hast thou e'er seen the dame? I pray thee, paint her.

Imo. They said her cheek of youth was beautiful
Till withering sorrow blanched the bright rose there—
And I have heard men swear her form was fair;
But grief did lay his icy finger on it,
And chilled it to a cold and joyless statue.
Methought she carolled blithely in her youth,
As the couched nestling trills his vesper lay,
But song and smile, beauty and melody,
And youth and happiness are gone from her.
Perchance—even as she is—he would not scorn her
If he could know her—for, for him she's changed;
She is much altered—but her heart—her heart.

Clot. I would I might behold that wretched lady,
In all her sad and waning loveliness.

Imo. Thou would'st not deem her wretched—out-
ward eyes

Would hail her happy.

They've decked her form in purple and in pall.

When she goes forth, the thronging vassals kneel,

And bending pages bear her footcloth well—

No eye beholds that lady in her bower,

That is her hour of joy, for then she weeps,

Nor does her husband hear.

Clot. Sayst thou her husband?—

How could she wed, she who did love so well?

Imo. How could she wed! What could I do but
wed—

Hast seen the sinking fortunes of thy house—

Hast felt the gripe of bitter shameful want—

Hast seen a father on the cold cold earth,

Hast read his eye of silent agony,
That asked relief, but would not look reproach
Upon his child unkind—
I would have wed disease, deformity,
Yea, griped Death's grisly form to 'scape from it—
And yet some sorcery was wrought on me,
For earlier things do seem as yesterday,
But, I've no recollection of the hour
They gave my hand to Aldobrand.

Clot. Blessed saints—

And was it thou indeed?

Imo. I am that wretch—

The wife of a most noble, honoured lord—
The mother of a babe whose smiles do stab me—
But *thou* art Bertram's still, and Bertram's ever!

(Striking her heart.)

Clot. Hath time no power upon thy hopeless love?

Imo. Yea, time hath power, and what a power I'll
tell thee,

A power to change the pulses of the heart
To one dull throb of ceaseless agony,
To hush the sigh on the resigned lip
And lock it in the heart—freeze the hot tear
And bid it on the eyelid hang for ever—
Such power hath time o'er me.

Clot. And has not then

A husband's kindness—

Imo. Mark me, Clotilda.

And mark me well, I am no desperate wretch
Who borrows an excuse from shameful passion
To make its shame more vile—
I am a wretched, but a spotless wife,

I've been a daughter but too dutiful—
But, oh ! the writhings of a generous soul
Stabb'd by a confidence it can't return,
To whom a kind word is a blow on th' heart—
I cannot paint thy wretchedness. (*bursts into tears*).

Clot.

Nay, nay

Dry up your tears, soon will your lord return,
Let him not see you thus by passion shaken.

Imo. Oh wretched is the dame, to whom the sound
“ Your lord will soon return ”—no pleasure brings.

Clot. Some step approaches—'tis St. Anselm's
Monk.

Imo. Remember—now, what wouldst thou reverend
father ?

Enter first Monk.

Monk. St. Anselm's benison on you, gracious dame,
Our holy prior by me commends him to you—
The wreck that struck upon our rocks i' th' storm
Hath thrown some wretched souls upon his care.
(For many have been saved since morning dawned)
Wherefore he prays the wonted hospitality
That the free noble usage of your castle
Doth grant to ship-wreck'd and distressed men—

Imo. Bear back my greetings to your holy prior—
Tell him the lady of St. Aldobrand
Holds it no sin, although her lord be absent,
To ope her gates to wave-tossed mariners—
Now Heaven forefend your narrow cells were cumbered
While these free halls stood empty—tell your prior
We hold the custom of our castle still.

[*Exeunt.*

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Convent, the Stranger lies sleeping on a Couch. The Prior watching him.

Prior. He sleeps, if it be sleep ; this starting trance
Whose feverish tossings and deep muttered groans,
Do prove the soul shares not the body's rest—

[hanging over him.

How the lip works, how the bare teeth do grind—
And beaded drops course down his writhen brow—
I will awake him from this horrid trance,
This is no natural sleep—ho, wake thee, stranger—

Stran. What, wouldst thou have, my life is in thy
power—

Prior. Most wretched man, whose fears alone be-
tray thee—

What art thou,—speak.

Stran. ————Thou sayest I am a wretch—
And thou sayest true—these weeds do witness it—
These wave-worn weeds—these bare and bruised limbs,
What wouldst thou more—I shrink not from the
question.

I am a wretch, and proud of wretchedness,
'Tis the sole earthly thing that cleaves to me.

Prior. Lightly I deem of outward wretchedness,
For that hath been the lot of blessed saints—
But in their dire extreme of outward wretchedness
Full calm they slept in dungeons and in darkness—
Such hath not been thy sleep—

Stran. Didst watch my sleep—
But thou couldst glean no secret from my ravings.—

Prior. Thy secrets, wretched man, I reckon not of
them—

But I adjure thee by the church's power
(A power to search man's secret heart of sin),
Shew me thy wound of soul—
Weep'st thou, the ties of nature or of passion
Torn by the hand of Heaven—

Oh no! full well I deemed no gentler feeling
Woke the dark lightning of thy withering eye—
What fiercer spirit is it tears thee thus?
Shew me the horrid tenant of thy heart—
Or wrath, or hatred, or revenge, is there—

Stran. (*suddenly starting from his Couch, falling
on his knees; and raising his clasped hands.*)

I would consort with mine eternal enemy,
To be revenged on him.—

Prior. Art thou a man, or fiend, who speakest thus.

Stran. I was a man, I know not what I am—
What others' crimes and injuries have made me—
Look on me—What am I?— [*advancing.*]

Prior. —————I know thee not.

Stran. I marvel that thou say'st it—
For lowly men full oft remember those
In changed estate, whom equals have forgotten:

A passing beggar hath remembered me,
When with strange eyes my kinsmen looked on me—
I wore no sullied weeds on that proud day
When thou a barefoot monk didst bow full low
For alms, my heedless hand hath flung to thee—
Thou doest not know me.— [*approaching him.*]

Prior. Mine eyes are dim with age—but many
thoughts
Do stir within me at thy voice.

Stran. List to me, monk, it is thy trade to talk,
As reverend men do use in saintly wise,
Of life's vicissitudes and vanities—
Hear one plain tale that doth surpass all saws—
Hear it from me—*Count Bertram*—aye—*Count*
Bertram—

The darling of his liege and of his land
The army's idol, and the council's head—
Whose smile was fortune, and whose will was law—
Doth bow him to the prior of St. Anselm
For water to refresh his parched lip,
And this hard-matted couch to fling his limbs on.—

Prior. Good Heaven and all its saints!—

Ber. Wilt thou betray me?—

Prior. Lives there the wretch beneath these walls
to do it?

Sorrow enough hath bowed thy head already
Thou man of many woes.—

Far more I fear least thou betray thyself.

Hard by do stand the halls of Aldobrand

(Thy mortal enemy and cause of fall),

Where ancient custom doth invite each stranger

Cast on this shore to sojourn certain days,
And taste the bounty of the castle's lord—
If thou goest not, suspicion will arise
And if thou dost (all changed as thou art),
Some desperate burst of passion will betray thee
And end in mortal scathe—

What dost thou gaze on with such fixed eyes?

Ber.—————What sayest thou?

I dreamed I stood before Lord Aldobrand
Impenetrable to his searching eyes—
And I did feel the horrid joy men feel
Measuring the serpent's coil whose fangs have stung
 them;
Scanning with giddy eye the air-hung rock
From which they leapt and live by miracle;
Following the dun skirt of the o'erpast storm
Whose bolt did leave them prostrate—
—To see that horrid spectre of my thoughts
In all the stern reality of life—
To mark the living lineaments of hatred,
And say, this is the man whose sight should blast me;
Yet in calm dreadful triumph still gaze on:—
It is a horrid joy.

Prior.—————Nay, rave not thus—

Thou wilt not meet him, many a day must pass
Till from Palermo's walls he wend him homeward—
Where now he tarries with St. Anselm's knights.—
His dame doth dwell in solitary wise
Few are the followers in his lonely halls—
Why dost thou smile in that most horrid guise?—

Ber. (repeating his words.)

His dame doth dwell alone—perchance his child—

Oh, no, no, no—it was a damned thought.

Prior. I do but indistinctly hear thy words,
But feel they have some fearful meaning in them.—

Ber. Oh, that I could but mate him in his might,
Oh, that we were on the dark wave together,
With but one plank between us and destruction,
That I might grasp him in these desperate arms,
And plunge with him amid the weltering billows—
And view him gasp for life—and—

Prior. Horrible—horrible—I charge thee cease—
The shrines are trembling on these sainted walls—
The stony forms will start to life and answer thee

Ber. Ha ha—I see him struggling—
I see him—ha, ha, ha (*a frantic laugh.*)

Prior.———Oh horrible—
Help, help—to hold him—for my strength doth fail—

Enter 1st Monk.

Monk. The lady of St. Aldrobrand sends greeting—

Prior. Oh, art thou come, this is no time for
greeting—

Help—bear him off—thou sees't his fearful state.

[*Exeunt bearing him off.*]

SCENE II.

Hall in the Castle of St. Aldobrand.

*Enter Hugo shewing in Bertram's Comrades,
Clotilda following.*

Hugo. This way, friends, this way, good cheer
awaits you.

1st Sail. Well then, good cheer was never yet
bestowed

On those who need it more.

Hugo. —————To what port bound,
Did this fell storm o'ertake you?

1st Sail. —————No matter
So we find here a comfortable haven.

Hugo. Whence came you?

1st Sail. —————Psha, I cannot answer fasting.

Hugo. Roughness, the proverb says, speaks honesty,
I hope the adage true.

Clot. Lead them in, Hugo,
They need speedy care—which is your leader?

1st Sail. He will be here anon—what ye would
know,
Demand of him.

2d Sail. (*advancing*) He's here.

Clot. I fain would learn
Their country and their fortunes.

*Enter Bertram, with a sullen air, but scrutinizing
all around.*

Clot. Is that him?
His looks appal me, I dare not speak to him,
[*All pause at his appearance.*]

Hugo. Come, come, the feast's prepared within,
this way.

[*Bertram passes on sullenly and exit.*]

Clot. The grief that clothes that leader's woe-
worn form,
The chilling awe his ruin'd grandeur wears
Is of no common sort—I must observe him.

[*Exit Clot.*]

1st Sail. Now, comrades, we will honour our host's
bounty
With jovial hearts, and gay forgetfulness
Of perils past and coming.

Glee.

We be men escaped from dangers,
Sweet to think of o'er our bowls;—
Wilds have ne'er known hardier rangers,
Hall shall ne'er see blither souls.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

*Moonlight; a terrassed rampart of the Castle; a part
of the latter is seen, the rest concealed by woods.*

*Imogene alone, she gazes at the Moon for some time,
and then advances slowly.*

Imo. ——— Mine own loved light,
That every soft and solemn spirit worships,
That lovers love so well—strange joy is thine,
Whose influence o'er all tides of soul hath power,

Who lendst thy light to rapture and despair ;—
The glow of hope and wan hue of sick fancy
Alike reflect thy rays : alike thou lightest
The path of meeting or of parting love—
Alike on mingling or on breaking hearts
Thou smil'st in throned beauty.—Bertram—Bertram.
How sweet it is to tell the listening night
The name beloved—it is a spell of power
To wake the buried slumberers of the heart,
Where memory lingers o'er the grave of passion
Watching its tranced sleep!—
The thoughts of other days are rushing on me,
The loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead,
Are with me now, and I will mingle with them
'Till my sense fails, and my raised heart is wrapt
In secret suspension of mortality.

Enter Clotilda.

Clot. Why dost thou wander by this mournful light,
Feeding sick fancy with the thought that poisons?—

Imo. I will but weep beneath the moon awhile.—
Now do not chide my heart for this sad respite,
The thoughts it most doth love do visit it then,
And make it feel like heaven—

Clot. Nay, come with me, and view those storm-
'scaped men
A feasting in thy hall; 'twill cheer thy heart—
Of perils 'scaped by flood and fire they tell,
And many an antique legend wild they know
And many a lay they sing—hark, their deep voices
Come faintly on the wind.

(*Noise of singing and revelry without.*)

Imo. Their wild and vulgar mirth doth startle me.
This clamorous wassail in a baron's hall
Ill suits the state of rescued fearful men :—
But as I passed the latticed gallery
One stood alone ;—I marked him where he stood,
His face was veiled,—faintly a light fell on him ;
But through soiled weeds his muffled form did shew
A wild and terrible grandeur.

Clot. I marked him too. He mixed not with the
rest,
But o'er his wild mates held a stern controul—
Their rudest burst of riotous merriment
Beneath his dark eye's stilling energy
Was hushed to silence.

Imo. He never spoke ?

Clot. No, he did nought but sigh,
If I might judge by the high-heaving vesture
Folded so deep on his majestic breast ;—
Of sound I heard not—

Imo. Call him hither.—
There is a mystery of woe about him
That strongly stirs the fancy.

Clot. Wilt thou confer alone, at night, with one
Who bears such fearful form ?

Imo. Why therefore send him—
All things of fear have lost their power o'er me—

[*Exit Clotilda.*]

Imogene appears to be debating with herself how to receive him, at length she says

Imo. If he do bear, like me, a withered heart
I will not mock him with a sound of comfort—

Bertram enters slowly from the end of the stage ; his arms folded, his eyes fixed on the earth, she does not know him.

Imo. A form like that hath broken on my dreams
So darkly wild, so proudly stern,
Doth it rise on me waking?

Bertram comes to the end of the stage, and stands without looking at her.

Imo. Stranger, I sent for thee, for that I deemed
Some wound was thine, that yon free band might
chafe,—

Perchance thy wordly wealth sunk with yon wreck—
Such wound my gold can heal—the castle's almoner—

Ber. The wealth of worlds were heaped on me in vain.

Imo. Oh then I read thy loss—Thy heart is sunk
In the dark waters pitiless ; some dear friend,
Or brother, loved as thine own soul, lies there—

I pity thee, sad man, but can no more—
Gold I can give, but can no comfort give
For I am comfortless—

Yet if I could collect my faltering breath
Well were I meet for such sad ministry,
For grief hath left my voice no other sound—

Ber. (*Striking his heart.*)

No dews give freshness to this blasted soil.—

Imo. Strange is thy form, but more thy words are
— strange—

Fearful it seems to hold this parley with thee.

Tell me thy race and country—

Ber. What avails it?

The wretched have no country : that dear name
Comprizes home, kind kindred, fostering friends,
Protecting laws, all that binds man to man—
But none of these are mine ;—I have no country—
And for my race, the last dread trump shall wake
The sheeted relics of mine ancestry,
Ere trump of herald to the armed lists
In the bright blazon of their stainless coat,
Calls their lost child again.—

Imo. I shake to hear him—

There is an awful thrilling in his voice,—

The soul of other days comes rushing in them.—

If nor my bounty nor my tears can aid thee,

Stranger, farewell ; and 'mid thy misery

Pray, when thou tell'st thy beads, for one more wretched.

Ber. Stay, gentle lady, I would somewhat with
thee.

Imagine retreats terrified.

(*Detaining her*)—Thou shalt not go—

Imo. Shall not!—Who art thou ? speak—

Ber. And must I speak?—

There was a voice which all the world, but thee

Might have forgot, and been forgiven,—

Imo. My senses blaze—between the dead and living
I stand in fear—oh God!—It cannot be—

Those thick black locks—those wild and sun-burnt
features

He looked not thus—but then that voice—

It cannot be—for he would know my name.

Ber. Imogine—[*She has tottered towards him during the last speech, and when he utters her name, shrieks and falls into his arms.*]

Ber. Imogine—yes,

Thus pale, cold, dying, thus thou art most fit

To be enfolded to this desolate heart—

A blighted lily on its icy bed—

Nay, look not up, 'tis thus I would behold thee.

That pale cheek looks like truth—I'll gaze no more—

That fair, that pale, dear cheek, these helpless arms,

If I look longer they will make me human.

Imo. (*starting from him.*)

Fly, fly, the vassals of thine enemy wait

To do thee dead.

Ber.

Then let them wield the thunder,

Fell is their dint, who're mailed i despair.

Let mortal might sever the grasp of Bertram.

Imo. Release me—I must break from him—he
knows not—

Oh God !

Ber.

Imogine—madness seizes me—

Why do I find thee in mine enemy's walls?

What dost thou do in halls of Aldobrand?

Infernal light doth shoot athwart my mind—

Swear thou art a dependent on his bounty,

That chance, or force, or sorcery, brought thee hither ;

Thou canst not be—my throat is swoln with agony—
Hell hath no plague—Oh no, thou couldst not do it.

Imo. (kneeling.) Mercy.

Ber. Thou hast it not, or thou wouldst speak—
Speak, speak, (*with frantic violence.*)

Imo. I am the wife of Aldobrand,—
To save a famishing father did I wed.

Ber. I will not curse *her*—but the hoarded vengeance—

Imo. Aye—curse, and consummate the horrid spell,
For broken-hearted, in despairing hour
With every omen dark and dire I wedded—
Some ministering demon mocked the robed priest,
With some dark spell, not holy vow they bound me,
Full were the rites of horror and despair.
They wanted but—the seal of Bertram's curse.

Ber. (not heeding her.)

—Talk of her father—could a father love thee
As I have loved?—the veriest wretch on earth
Doth cherish in some corner of his heart,
Some thought that makes that heart a sanctuary
For pilgrim dreams in midnight-hour to visit,
And weep and worship there.

—And such thou wert to me—and thou art lost.

—What was her father? could a father's love
Compare with mine?—in want, and war, and peril,
Things that would thrill the hearer's blood to tell of,
My heart grew human when I thought of thee—
Imagine would have shuddered for my danger—
Imagine would have bound my leechless wounds—
Imagine would have sought my nameless corse,

And known it well—and she was wedded—wedded—
—Was there no name in hell's dark catalogue
To brand thee with, but mine immortal foe's?—
And did I 'scape from war, and want, and famine
To perish by the falsehood of a woman?

Imo. Oh spare me,—Bertram—oh preserve thyself—

Ber. A despot's vengeance, a false country's curses,
The spurn of menials whom this hand had fed—
In my heart's steeled pride I shook them off,
As the bayed lion from his hurtless hide
Shakes his pursuers' darts—across their path—
One dart alone took aim, thy hand did barb it.

Imo. He did not hear my father's cry—Oh heaven—
Nor food, nor fire, nor raiment, and his child
Knelt madly to the hungry walls for succour
E'er her wrought brain could bear the horrid thought
Or wed with him—or—see thy father perish.

Ber. Thou tremblest least I curse thee, tremble
not—
Though thou hast made me, woman, very wretched—
Though thou hast made me—but I will not curse
thee—

Hear the last prayer of Bertram's broken heart,
That heart which thou hast broken, not his foes!—
Of thy rank wishes the full scope be on thee—
May pomp and pride shout in thine adder'd path
Till thou shalt feel and sicken at their hollowness—
May he thou'st wed, be kind and generous to thee
Till thy wrung heart, stabb'd by his noble fondness
Writhe in detesting consciousness of falsehood—

May thy babe's smile speak daggers to that mother
Who cannot love the father of her child,
And in the bright blaze of the festal hall,
When vassals kneel, and kindred smile around thee,
May ruined Bertram's pledge hiss in thine ear—
Joy to the proud dame of St. Aldobrand—
While his cold corse doth bleach beneath her towers.

Imo. (Detaining him) Stay.

Ber. No.

Imo. Thou hast a dagger.

Ber. Not for woman.—

Imo. (flinging herself on the ground)

It was my prayer to die in Bertram's presence,
But not by words like these—

Ber. (turning back)—on the cold earth !

—I do forgive thee from my inmost soul—

(The child of Imogine rushes in and clings to her)

Child. Mother.

Ber. (eagerly snatching up the child)

God bless thee, child—Bertram hath kissed thy child.

*(He rushes out, Clotilda enters gazing after him
in terror, and goes to afford relief to Imogine).*

The curtain drops.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Wood;—the Stage darkened;—St. Aldobrand speaking to a page behind the Scenes.

Ald. Hold thou my good steed, page; the moon is down,
We've far outstript the knights, but slacker speed
Hath found a surer road—where, think'st thou, are we?

Enter St. Aldobrand and a Page.

Vainly I listen through the night so still
For bell that tells of holy convent near,
Or warder's bugle from the battlement,
Or horn of knight returning from the chase—
All is dark, still, and lorn; where deemest thou are we?

Page. Oh we are nigh a fell and fearful spot,
For by the last gleams of the sunken moon
I saw the towers—

Ald. What towers are those, boy?

Page. The ruined towers that 'tis said are haunted—
Dimly they rose amid the doubtful gloom,
But not one star-beam twinkled on their summits.

Ald. Then, not four leagues divide me from mine home.—

Mine home—it is a pleasant sound—there bide
My dame and child—all pleasant thoughts dwell
there—

“ Then, while I rest beneath this broad-armed tree,

“ Or oak, or elm, in this dark night I wot not—

“ It shall be thy sweet penance to rehearse

“ All thou hast heard of these most fearful towers—

“ The tale will sooth my sleep, nor mar my dreams—

“ *Page.* Then let me couch by thee—I pray thee do—

“ For ever I love 'mid frightful tales i' th' dark

“ To touch the hand I tell the tale of fear to”—

[*A bell tolls.*

Ald. Hark! 'tis the convent bell, forego thy tale—

The blessed thoughts of home are in that sound

That near my castle's gallant walls doth float—

[*Chorus of knights heard faintly
from the forest.*

Ald. What voices swell upon the midnight air?

Page. St. Anselm's knights.

Ald. Yes, 'tis their pious wont,

When journeying near the sound of convent-bell

'Mid flood or fire, to raise the holy hymn

That chaunts the praise of their protecting saint—

List to the solemn harmony—

Guided by that we may rejoin their company.

[*Exeunt.*

*Chorus heard again, and continues drawing nearer
till the scene changes.*

SCENE II.

The Convent.

The Prior reading ; Bertram views him with the attention of one who envies him, then speaks.

Ber. How many hours have passed since matin-bell?

Prior. I know not, till it sound again to vespers.
Time passes o'er us with a noiseless lapse :
Our hours are marked alone by prayer and study,
And know no change but by their mute succession—

Ber. Yea—thus they live, if this may life be
called

Where moving shadows mock the parts of men.
Prayer follows study, study yields to prayer—
Bell echoes bell, till wearied with the summons
The ear doth ache for that last welcome peal
That tolls an end to listless vacancy—
Aye—when the red swol'n stream comes 'roaring
down—

Full many a glorious flower, and stately tree,
Floats on the ruthless tide, whose unfelt sway
Moves not the mire that stagnates at the bottom.
The storm for Bertram—and it hath been with me,
Dealt with me branch and bole, bared me to th' roots,
And where the next wave bears my perished trunk
In its dread lapse, I neither know, nor reck of—

Prior.—Thou desperate man, whom mercy
woos in vain,
Although with miracles she pleads—

Forbear, I say, to taint these holy echoes
With the fell sounds of thy profane despair.—

Ber. Good monk, I am beholden to your patience.
Take this from one, whose lips do mock at praise ;—
Thou art a man, whose mild and reverend functions
Might change the black creed of misanthropy,
And bid my better angel half return.—
But—'tis impossible—I will not trouble thee—
The wayward Bertram and his moody mates
Are tenants all unmeet for cloistered walls—
We will find fitter home.

Prior. Whither wilt thou resort ?

Ber. Is there no forest
Whose shades are dark enough to shelter us ;
Or cavern rifted by the perilous lightning,
Where we must grapple with the tenanting wolf
To earn our bloody lair ?—there let us bide,
Nor hear the voice of man, nor call of heaven.—

Pri. Wend not, I charge thee, with those desperate
men.

Full well I wot who are thy fearful mates—
In their stern strife with the incensed deep,
That dashed them bruised and breathless on our
shores,
When their drenched hold forsook both gold and geer,
They griped their daggers with a murderer's instinct.
—I read thee for the leader of a band
Whose trade is blood.—

Ber. Well then, thou knowest the worst—
And let the worst be known, I am their leader—

Pri. Mark what I reed, renounce that horrid league—

Flee to the castle of St. Aldobrand,
His power may give thee safety, and his dame
May plead for thee against the law's stern purpose—
All as thou art unknown—

Ber. His dame plead for me!—
When my cold corse, torn from some felon wheel,
Or dug from lightless depth of stony dungeon,
Welters in the cold gaze of pitiless strangers,
Then fling it at his gate, whose cursed stones
My living foot treads never,—yet beware
Lest the corse burst its cearments stark, and curse
thee—

Pri. Hush, hush these horrid sounds; where wilt
thou bide?
Near us nor knight nor baron holds his keep,
For far and wide thy foeman's land extends.

Ber. The world hath ample realms beyond his
power.
There must I dwell—I seek my rugged mates—
The frozen mountain, or the burning sand
Would be more wholesome than the fertile realm
That's lorded o'er by Aldobrand.

[*Exit Bertram.*]

Pri. High-hearted man, sublime even in thy guilt,
Whose passions are thy crimes, whose angel-sin
Is pride that rivals the star-bright apostate's.—
Wild admiration thrills me to behold
An evil strength, so above earthly pitch—
Descending angels only could reclaim thee—

Enter 2d Monk.

Monk. The lady of St. Aldobrand in haste
Craves swift admittance to your sacred cell.

Pri. She is a gracious, and a pious dame,
And doth our cell much honour by her presence.

Enter Imogine. She kneels to him.

Pri. The blessings of these sainted walls be on thee.
Why art thou thus disturbed, what moves thee,
daughter?

Imo. Nay, do not raise me with those reverend
hands,
Nor benison of saint greet mine approach,
Nor shadow of holy hand stretched forth to bless me.—
I am a wretched, soul-struck, guilty woman.

Pri. Thou dost amaze me; by mine holy order
I deemed no legends of our cloistered saints
Held holier records of pure sanctity
Than the clear answer of thy stainless life
To shrift's most piercing search—

Imo. Oh holy prior, no matron proud and pure,
Whose dreams ne'er wandered from her wedded lord,
Whose spoused heart was plighted with her hand,
Kneels for thy prayer of power—I am a wretch,
Who, pale and withering with unholy love,
Lay a shrunk corse in duty's fostering arms,
And with cold smiles belied her heart's despair.
I've nursed a slumbering serpent till it stung me,
And from my heart's true guardian, hid its foulness

Prior. Thou'st done an evil deed—
For sin is of the soul, and thine is tainted—

But most I blame thee, that from thy soul's guardian
Thou hiddest thy secret guilt.

Imo. I knew it not—
Last night, oh! last night told a dreadful secret—
The moon went down, its sinking ray shut out,
The parting form of one beloved too well.—
The fountain of my heart dried up within me,—
With nought that loved me, and with nought to love
I stood upon the desart earth alone—
I stood and wondered at my desolation—
For I had spurned at every tie for him,
And hardly could I beg from injured hearts
The kindness that my desperate passion scorned—
And in that deep and utter agony,
Though then, than ever most unfit to die,
I fell upon my knees, and prayed for death.

Prior. And didst deserve it, wert thou meet for it—
Art thou a wife and mother, and canst speak
Of life rejected by thy desperate passion—
These bursting tears, wrung hands, and burning words,
Are these the signs of penitence or passion?
Thou comest to me, for to my ear alone
May the deep secret of thy heart be told,
And fancy riot in the luscious poison—
Fond of the misery we paint so well,
Proud of the sacrifice of broken hearts,
We pour on heav'n's dread ear, what man's would
shrink from—

Yea, make a merit of the impious insult,
And wrest the functions of mine holy office
To the foul ministry of earthly passion.

Imo. Why came I here, I had despair at home—
Where shall the wretch resort whom Heaven forsakes?

Prior. — Thou hast forsaken Heaven.
Speed to thy castle, shut thy chamber door,
Bind fast thy soul by every solemn vow
Never to hold communion with that object—
If still thy wishes contradict thy prayers,
If still thy heart's responses yield no harmony—
Weary thy saint with agonies of prayer;
On the cold marble quench thy burning breast;
Number with every bead a tear of soul;
Press to thy heart the cross, and bid it banish
The form that would usurp its image there—

Imo. (kneeling) One parting word—

Prior. No, not one parting look—
One parting thought, I charge thee on thy soul.

Imo. (turning away) He never loved.—

Prior. Why clingest thou to my raiment?
Thy grasp of grief is stronger on my heart—
For sterner oft our words than feelings are.

Enter 1st Monk and Page.

Monk. Hail, holy prior, and hail thou noble dame,
With joyful heart I break upon your privacy—
St. Aldobrand before his own good gates
Doth rein his war-steed's pride; the warder's horn
Full merrily rings his peal of welcome home—
I hied me onward with the joyful tidings
To greet his happy dame.

Imo. My thanks await them.—

Prior. Now, by my beads the news is wond'rous welcome—

Hath thy brave lord in safety reached his home—

Praise to St. Anselm who ne'er leaves his servants.

My rosary hath been well told for him—

(Clear thy dimmed brow, for shame! hie to thy lord,
And shew a 'dame's true duty in his welcome.)

Came with thy lord the knights of good St. Anselm

Bearing the banner of their guardian saint

Safe from the infidel scathe?—

Page. They come with speed—

Though lated in the forest's wildering maze;

Last night their shelter was the broad brown oak—

Pri. High praise be given—haste, summon all our
brethren;

Th' occasion, noble dame, doth call me from thee—

So Benedicite—

[*Exeunt.*

Imo. (*alone*) That word should mean—

A blessing rest on me—I am not blest—

I'm weary of this conflict of the heart—

These dying struggles of reluctant duty—

These potent throes of wild convulsive passion.

Would I were seared in guilt, or strong in innocence—

I dare not search my heart; some iron vow

Shall bind me down in passive wretchedness,

And mock the force of my rebellious heart

To break its rivetting holds—

[*As she kneels, enter Bertram.*

Ha! art thou there?—

Come kneel with me, and witness to the vow

I offer to renounce thee, and to die—

Ber. Nay, it is meet that we renounce each other—
Have we not been a miserable pair?
Hath not our fatal passion cursed, not blessed us?—
Had we not loved, how different were our fates;
For thou hadst been a happy honoured dame,
And I had slept the sleep of those that dream not—
But life was dear, while Imogene did love.

Imo. Witness my vow—while I have breath to
speak it—

Ber. Then make it thus—why dost thou shrink
from me?

Despair hath its embrace as well as passion—
May I not hold thee in these folded arms?
May I not clasp thee to this blasted heart?
When the rich soil teemed with youth's generous
flowers—

I felt thee sunshine—now thy rayless light
Falls like the cold moon on a blasted heath
Mocking its desolation—speak thy vow—
I will not chide thee if the words should kill me—

Imo. (*sinking into his arms*). I cannot utter
it—

Ber. Have we not loved, as none have ever loved,
And must we part as none have ever parted?
I know thy lord is near; I know his towers
Must shut thee from my sight—the curfew-hour
Will send me on a far and fearful journey—
Give me one hour, nor think thou givest too much,
When grief is all the boon.—

Imo. One hour to thee?

Ber. When the cold moon gleams on thy castle
walls,
Wilt thou not seek the spot where last we met?
That be our parting spot—Oh Imogine—
Heaven that denies the luxury of bliss
Shall yield at least the luxury of anguish,
And teach us the stern pride of wretchedness—
“ Our parting hour be at the dim moonlight,
“ And we will make that hour of parting dearer
“ Than years of happy love—what recollections—
“ What rich and burning tears—in that blessed hour
“ Our former hearts shall glide into our breasts,
“ Mine free from care, as thine was light of sorrow—
That hour shall light my parting step of darkness—
Imogine’s form did gleam on my last glance,
Imogine’s breath did mix with my last sigh,
Imogine’s tear doth linger on my cheek,
But ne’er must dew my grave—

Imo. I am desperate
To say I’ll meet thee, but I will, will meet thee ;
No future hour can rend my heart like this
Save that which breaks it.—

[*The child runs in, and clings to Imogine.*]

Child. My father is returned, and kissed and blessed
me—

Imo. (*falling on the child’s neck.*) What have I
done, my child ; forgive thy mother.

Ber. (*Surveying her with stern contempt.*)
Woman, oh woman, and an urchin’s kiss
Rends from thy heart thy love of many years—

Go, virtuous dame, to thy most happy lord,
And Bertram's image taint your kiss with poison.

[*Exit Bertram.*]

Imo. (*Alone*) 'Tis but the last—and I have sworn
to meet him
My boy, my boy, thy image will protect me.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A dark night under the Castle Walls;—Bertram appears in a state of the utmost agitation;—he extends his arms towards a spot where the Moon has disappeared.

Ber. Thou hidest away thy face, and wilt not view me,

All the bright lights of heaven are dark above me—

Beneath the black cope of this starless night

There lurks no darker soul—

My fiend-like glory hath departed from me—

Bertram hath nought above the meanest losel—

I should have bearded him in halls of pride—

I should have mated him in fields of death—

Not stol'n upon his secret bower of peace,

And breathed a serpent's venom on his flower.

(He looks up at the casement of the tower, at which a light appears, he gazes on it)—She is there—

She weeps—no husband wipes her tears away—

She weeps—no babe doth cheer the guilty mother.

Aldobrand—No—I never will forgive thee,

For I am sunk beneath thee—Who art thou?

Enter Two of Bertram's Band.

1st. Rob. Why dost thou wander in the woods alone,

Leaving thy mates to play with idle hilts,
Or dream with monks o'er rosary and relic?
Give us a deed to do.

Ber. Yes, ye are welcome,
Your spirits shall be proud—ho—hear ye, villains,
I know ye both—ye are slaves that for a ducat
Would rend the screaming infant from the breast
To plunge it in the flames;
Yea, draw your keen knives cross a father's throat,
And carve with them the bloody meal ye earned;
Villains, rejoice, your leader's crimes have purged you,
You punished guilt—I preyed on innocence—
Ye have beheld me fallen—begone—begone.

1st. Rob. Why then, Heaven's benison be with you,
Thou'lt need it if thou tarriest longer here.

Ber. How, slave, what fear you?

2d. Rob. Fly; this broad land hath not one spot to
hide thee,

Danger and death await thee in those walls.

Ber. They'd fell a blasted tree—well—let it fall—
But though the perished trunk feel not the wound;
Woe to the smiting hand—its fall may crush him.

1st. Rob. Lord Aldobrand
Holds high commission from his sovereign liege
To hunt thy outlaw'd life through Sicily.

Ber. (wildly.) Who—what—

2d. Rob. We mingled with the men at arms
As journeying home. Their talk was of Count Bertram,
Whose vessel had from Manfredonia's coast
Been traced towards this realm.

1st. Rob. And if on earth his living form were found,

Lord Aldobrand had power to seal his doom.

Some few did pity him.

Ber. (bursting into ferocity.) Villain, abhorred villain.

Hath he not pushed me to extremity?

Are these wild weeds, these scarred and scathed limbs,

This wasted frame, a mark for human malice?

There have been those who from the high bark's side

Have whelmed their enemy in the flashing deep;

But who hath watch'd to see his struggling hands,

To hear the sob of death?—Fool—ideot—ideot—

'Twas but e'en now, I would have knelt to him

With the prostration of a conscious villain;

I would have crouched beneath his spurning feet;

I would have felt their trampling tread, and blessed it--

For I had injured him--and mutual injury

Had freed my withered heart--Villain--I thank thee.

“ 1st. *Rob.* What wilt thou do? shall we prepare
for blows?

“ *Ber.* Behold me, Earth, what is the life he hunts
for?

“ Come to my cave, thou human hunter, come;

“ For thou hast left thy prey no other lair,

“ But the bleak rock, or howling wilderness;

“ Cheer up thy pack of fanged and fleshed hounds,

“ Flash all the flames of hell upon its darkness,

“ Then enter if thou darest.

“ Lo, there the crushed serpent coils to sting thee,

“ Yea, spend his life upon the mortal throe.”

1st. *Rob.* Wilt thou fly?

Ber. Never—on this spot I stand

The champion of despair---this arm my brand---
This breast my panoply---and for my gage---
(Oh thou hast reft from me all knightly pledge)
Take these black hairs torn from a head that hates thee---
Deep be their dye, before that pledge is ransomed---
In thine heart's blood or mine---why strivest thou with
me?

(Wild with passion.)

Lord Aldobrand, I brave thee in thy halls,
Wrecked, famished, wrung in heart, and worn in
limb---

For bread of thine this lip hath never stained---
I bid thee to the conflict---aye, come on---
Coward---hast armed thy vassals?---come then all---
Follow---ye shall have work enough---Follow.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

*Imogine in her apartment---a lamp burning on the
Table---She walks some time in great agitation
and then pushes the light away.*

Imo. Away, thou glarest on me, thy light is hateful;
Whom doth the dark wind chide so hollowly?
The very stones shrink from my steps of guilt,
All lifeless things have come to life to curse me:
Oh! that a mountain's weight were cast on me;
Oh! that the wide, wild ocean heaved o'er me;
Oh! that I could into the earthy centre
Sink and be nothing.
Sense, memory, feeling, life extinct and swallowed,

With things that are not, or have never been,
Lie down and sleep the everlasting sleep---

(She sinks on the ground.)

If I run mad, some wild word will betray me,
Nay--let me think---what am I?---no, what was I?

(A long pause.)

I was the honoured wife of Aldobrand;
I am the scorned minion of a ruffian.

Enter Clotilda.

Imo. Who art thou that thus comest on me in
darkness?

Clot. The taper's blaze doth make it bright as noon.

Imo. I saw thee not, till thou wert close to me.
So steal the steps of those who watch the guilty;
How darest thou gaze thus earnestly upon me;
What seest thou in my face?

Clot. A mortal horror.
If aught but godless souls at parting bear
The lineaments of despair, such face is thine.

Imo. See'st thou despair alone?
Nay, mock me not, for thou hast read more deeply,
Else why that piercing look.

Clot. I meant it not—
But since thy lonely walk upon the rampart—
Strange hath been thy demeanour, all thy maidens
Do speak in busy whispers of its wildness—

Imo. Oh hang me shuddering on the baseless crag—
The vampire's wing, the wild-worm's sting be on me,
But hide me, mountains, from the man I've injured—

Clot. Whom hast thou injured?

Imo. Whom doth woman injure ?
Another daughter dries a father's tears ;
Another sister claims a brother's love ;
An injured husband hath no other wife,
Save her who wrought him shame.

Clot. I will not hear thee,

Imo. We met in madness, and in guilt we
parted—

Oh ! I see horror rushing to thy face—
Do not betray me, I am penitent—
Do not betray me, it will kill my Lord—
Do not betray me, it will kill my boy,
My little one that loves me.

Clot. Wretched woman—

Whom guilt hath flung at a poor menial's feet—
Rise, rise, how canst thou keep thy fatal secret ?
Those fixt and bloodshot eyes, those wringing hands—

Imo. And were I featureless, inert, and marble—
Th' accuser *here* would speak—

Clot. Wilt thou seek comfort from the holy prior ?

Imo. When I was innocent, I sought it of him—
For if his lip of wrath refused my pardon,
My heart would have absolved me—
Now when that heart condemns me, what avails
The pardon of my earthly erring judge ?

Clot. Yet, hie from hence, upon their lady's bower
No menial dares intrude.

Imo. That seat of honour—
My guilty steps shall never violate—
What fearful sound is that ?

Clot. Alas, a feller trial doth abide thee ;

I hear thy lord's approach.

Madness is in thy looks, he'll know it all—

Imo. Why, I am mad with horror and remorse—

He comes, he comes in all that murderous kindness ;

Oh Bertram's curse is on me.

Enter Aldobrand.

Ald. How fares my dame ? give me thy white hand,
love.

Oh it is pleasant for a war-worn man

To couch him on the downy lap of comfort—

And on his rush-strewn floors of household peace

Hear his doffed harness ring—Take thou my helmet ;

(To page who goes out.)

Well may man toil for such an hour as this.

Imo. (standing timidly near him)

Yea, happier they, who on the bloody field

Stretch when their toil is done—

Ald.—What means my love ?

Imo. Is there not rest among the quiet dead ;

But is there surely rest in mortal dwellings ?

Ald. Deep loneliness hath wrought this mood in
thee,

For like a cloistered votaress, thou hast kept,

Thy damsels tell me, this lone turret's bound—

A musing walk upon the moonlight ramparts,

Or thy lute's mournful vespers all thy cheering—

Not thine to parley at the latticed casement

With wandering wooer, or—

Imo. (wildly) For mercy's sake forbear—

Ald. How farest thou ?

Imo. (*recovering*) well—well—a sudden pain o' th' heart.

Ald. Knowest thou the cause detained me hence so long,

And which again must call me soon away ?

Imo. (*trying to recollect herself*)—Was it not war ?

Ald.—Aye, and the worst war, love—

When our fell foes are our own countrymen.

Thou knowest the banished Bertram—why, his name
Doth blanch thy altered cheek, as if his band

With their fierce leader, were within these towers—

Imo. Mention that name no more—on with thy tale—

Ald. I need not tell thee, how his mad ambition
Strove with the crown itself for sovereignty—

The craven monarch was his subject's slave—

In that dread hour my country's guard I stood,

From the state's vitals tore the coiled serpent,

First hung him writhing up to public scorn,

Then flung him forth to ruin.

Imo. Thou need'st not tell it—

Ald. Th' apostate would be great even in his fall—

On Manfredonia's wild and wooded shore

His desperate followers awed the regions round—

Late from Taranto's gulf his bark was traced

Right to these shores, perchance the recent storm

Hath spared me further search, but if on earth

His living form be found—

Imo. Think'st thou he harbours here—

Go, crush thy foe—for he is mine and thine—
But tell me not when thou hast done the deed.

Ald. Why art thou thus, my Imogine, my love?
In former happier hours thy form and converse
Had, like thy lute, that gracious melancholy
Whose most sad sweetness is in tune with joy—
Perchance I've been to thee a rugged mate—
My soldier's mood is all too lightly chafed—
But when the gust hath spent its short-liv'd fury,
I bowed before thee with a child's submission,
And wooed thee with a weeping tenderness.

Imo. (*after much agitation*) Be generous, and
stab me—

Ald. Why is this?
I have no skill in woman's changeful moods,
Tears without grief and smiles without a joy—
My days have passed away 'mid war and toil—
The grinding casque hath worn my locks of youth ;
Beshrew its weight, it hath ploughed furrows there,
Where time ne'er drove its share—mine heart's sole
wish

Is to sit down in peace among its inmates—
To see mine home for ever bright with smiles,
'Mid thoughts of past, and blessed hopes of future,
Glide through the vacant hours of waning life—
Then die the blessed death of aged honour,
Grasping thy hand of faith, and fixing on thee
Eyes that, though dim in death, are bright with love.

Imo. Thou never wilt—thou never wilt on me—
Ne'er erred the prophet heart that grief inspired
Though joy's illusions mock their votarist—

I'm dying, Aldobrand, a malady
Preys on my heart, that medicine cannot reach,
Invisible and cureless—look not on me
With looks of love, for then it stings me deepest—
When I am cold, when my pale sheeted corse
Sleeps the dark sleep no venom'd tongue can wake
List not to evil thoughts of her whose lips
Have then no voice to plead—
Take to thine arms some honourable dame,
(Blessed will she be within thine arms of honour)
And—if he dies not on his mother's grave—
Still love my boy as if that mother lived.

Ald. Banish such gloomy dreams—
'Tis solitude that makes thee speak thus sadly—
No longer shalt thou pine in lonely halls.
Come to thy couch, my love—

Imo. Stand off—unhand me.—

Forgive me, oh my husband;
I have a vow—a solemn vow is on me—
And black perdition gulf my perjured soul
If I ascend the bed of peace and honour
'Till that——

Ald. 'Till what?

Imo. My penance is accomplished.

Ald. Nay, Heav'n forefend I should disturb thy
orisons—

The reverend prior were fittest counsellor—
Farewell!—but in the painful hour of penance
Think upon me, and spare thy tender frame.

Imo. And dost thou leave me with such stabbing
kindness?

Ald. (to Clotilda who goes out) Call to my page
To bring the torch and light me to my chamber—

Imo. (with a sudden impulse falling on her knees)
Yet, ere thou goest, forgive me, oh my husband—

Ald. Forgive thee!—What?—

Imo. Oh, we do all offend—
There's not a day of wedded life, if we
Count at its close the little, bitter sum
Of thoughts, and words, and looks unkind and froward,
Silence that chides and woundings of the eye—
But prostrate at each others' feet, we should
Each night forgiveness ask—then what should I?—

Ald. (not hearing the last words) Why take it
freely ;
I well may pardon, what I ne'er have felt.

Imo. (following him on her knees, and kissing his
hand)

Dost thou forgive me from thine inmost soul—
God bless thee, oh, God bless thee—

Ald. Farewell—mine eyes grow heavy, thy sad
talk

Hath stolen a heaviness upon my spirits—
I will unto my solitary couch—Farewell.

[*Exit Aldobrand.*

Imo. There is no human heart can bide this con-
flict—

All dark and horrible,—Bertram must die—
But oh, within these walls, before mine eyes,
Who would have died for him, while life had value ;—
He shall not die,—Clotilda, ho, come forth—
He yet may be redeemed, though I am lost—

Let him depart, and pray for her he ruin'd.
Hah! was it fancy's work—I hear a step—
It hath the speech-like thrilling of *his* tread;
It is himself.

Enter Bertram.

It is a crime in me to look on thee—
But in whate'er I do there now is crime—
Yet wretched thought still struggles for thy safety—
Fly, while my lips without a crime may warn thee—
Would thou hadst never come, or sooner parted.
Oh God—he heeds me not;
Why comest thou thus, what is thy fearful business?
I know thou comest for evil, but its purport
I ask my heart in vain.

Ber. Guess it, and spare me. (*A long pause, during
which she gazes at him.*)

Canst thou not read it in my face?

Imo. I dare not;
Mixt shades of evil thought are darkening there;
But what my fears do indistinctly guess
Would blast me to behold—(*turns away, a pause.*)

Ber. Dost thou not hear it in my very silence?
That which no voice can tell, doth tell itself.

Imo. My harassed thought hath not one point of fear,
Save that it must not think.

Ber. (*throwing his dagger on the ground.*)
Speak thou for me,—
Shew me the chamber where thy husband lies,
The morning must not see us both alive.

Imo. (*screaming and struggling with him.*)

Ah! horror! horror! off---withstand me not,
I will arouse the castle, rouse the dead,
To save my husband; “villain, murderer, monster,
“Dare the bayed lioness, but fly from me.

“*Ber.* Go, wake the castle with thy frantic cries;
“Those cries that tell my secret, blazon thine.

“Yea, pour it on thine husband’s blasted ear.

“*Imo.* Perchance his wrath may kill me in its mercy.

“*Ber.* No, hope not such a fate of mercy from him;

“He’ll curse thee *with his pardon*.

“And would his death-fixed eye be terrible

“As its ray bent in love on her that wronged him?

“And would his dying groan affright thine ear

“Like words of peace spoke to thy guilt---in vain?

“*Imo.* I care not, I am reckless, let me perish.

“*Ber.* No, thou must live amid a hissing world,

“A thing that mothers warn their daughters from,

“A thing the menials that do tend thee scorn,

“Whom when the good do name, they tell their beads,

“And when the wicked think of, they do triumph;

“Canst thou encounter this?

“*Imo.* I must encounter it---I have deserved it;

“Begone, or my next cry shall wake the dead.

“*Ber.* Hear me.

“*Imo.* No parley, tempter, fiend, avaunt.

“*Ber.* *Thy son---(she stands stupified.)*

“Go, take him trembling in thy hand of shame,

“A victim to the shrine of public scorn---

“Poor boy! his sire’s worst foe might pity him,

“Albeit his mother will not---

“Banished from noble halls, and knightly converse,

“ Devouring his young heart in loneliness!

“ With bitter thought—my mother was—a wretch.”

Imo. (falling at his feet.)

I am a wretch—but—who hath made me so?

I’m writhing like a worm, beneath thy spurn.

Have pity on me, I have had much wrong.

Ber. My heart is as the steel within my grasp.

Imo. (still kneeling.) Thou hast cast me down from
light,

From my high sphere of purity and peace,

Where once I walked in mine uprightness, blessed—

Do not thou cast me into utter darkness.

Ber. (looking on her with pity for a moment.) Thou
fairest flower—

Why didst thou fling thyself across my path,

My tiger spring must crush thee in its way,

But cannot pause to pity thee.

Imo. Thou must,

For I am strong in woes—I ne’er reproached thee—

I plead but with my agonies and tears—

Kind, gentle Bertram, my beloved Bertram,

For thou wert gentle once, and once beloved,

Have mercy on me—Oh thou couldst not think it—

*(Looking up, and seeing no relenting in his face, she
starts up wildly.)*

By heaven and all its host, he shall not perish.

Ber. By hell and all its host, he shall not live.

This is no transient flash of fugitive passion—

His death hath been my life for years of misery—

Which else I had not lived—

Upon that thought, and not on food, I fed,

Upon that thought, and not on sleep, I rested---
I come to do the deed that must be done---
Nor thou, nor sheltering angels, could prevent me.

Imo. But man shall---miscreant---help.

Ber. Thou callest in vain---

The armed vassals all are far from succour---
Following St. Anselm's votarists to the convent---
My band of blood are darkening in their halls---
Wouldst have him butchered by their ruffian hands
That wait my bidding?

Imo. (*falling on the ground.*)---Fell and horrible
I'm sealed, shut down in ransomless perdition.

Ber. Fear not, my vengeance will not yield its prey,
He shall fall nobly, by my hand shall fall---
But still and dark the summons of its fate,
So winds the coiled serpent round his victim.

(*A horn sounds without.*)

Whence was that blast? those felon slaves are come---
He shall not perish by their ruffian hands.

[*Exit Bertram.*

Imo. (*gazing round her, and slowly recovering
recollection, repeats his last words*)---He shall
not perish---

Oh! it was all a dream---a horrid dream---

He was not here---it is impossible---

(*Tottering towards the door.*)

I will not be alone another moment
Lest it do come again---where, where art thou?---

Enter Clotilda.

Clo. Didst thou not call me?---at thy voice of
anguish

I hasten, though I cannot hear thy words—

Imo. Let me lean on thee, let me hold thee fast—

“ Yea, strongly grasp some strong substantial thing

“ To scare away foul forms of things that are not—

They have been with me in my loneliness.

“ Oh, I have had such dark and horrid thoughts,

“ But they are gone—we will not think of them—

Clo. What hath been with thee?

“ *Imo.* Something dark that hovered [*deliriously.*

“ Upon the confines of unmingling worlds,

“ In dread for life—for death too sternly definite,

Something the thought doth try in vain to follow—

Through mist and twilight—

Clo. Woe is me ! methought

I saw the form of Bertram as I entered—

Imo. (*Starting with sudden recollection*)

Oh God—it was no vision then, thou sawest him —

Give me my phrensy back—one moment's thought—

'Tis done, by Heaven, 'tis done—

I will fall down before his injured feet,

I'll tell him all my shame, and all my guilt,

My wrongs shall be a weapon in his hand,

And if it fail, this tainted frame of sin

Shall fall a shield before my husband's breast—

I'll wake the castle—wake the faithful vassals

I'll——(*going she stops suddenly*).

I cannot be the herald of my shame,

Go thou, and tell them what I cannot utter.

Clo. Oh, yet forgive me, through that gloomy
passage

I dare not venture, lest that dark form meet me.

Imo. Nay, thou must go, 'tis I that dare not venture—

For, if I see him in his holy sleep
Resting so calmly on the bed I've wronged,
My heart will burst, and he must die warned—

[*Exit Clotilda.*

Imo. (*Listening after her*).

How long she lingers—aye—he knows my guilt
Even from this untold summons—aye—my boy
They'll clothe thee with *my* shame.
Hush—look—all's still within—an horrid stillness—
Perchance, that she, even she is bribed to aid—
Woe's me, who now can trust a menial's faith,
When that his wedded wife hath done him wrong—

Enter Clotilda.

Clo. All's safe—all's well—

Imo. What meanest thou by those words?—
For sounds of comfort to my blasted ear
Do ring a death-peal—

Clo. Heardest thou not the horn?

Imo. I heard no horn, I only heard a voice
That menaced murder—

Clo. Oh! the horn did sound—
And with it came a blessed messenger.
St. Anselm's knights within their patron's walls
Do hold a solemn feast, and o'er his shrine
They hang the holy banner of his blessing—
Full swiftly came the summons to thy lord
To join them in their solemn ceremony—
Lord Aldobrand with few attendants gone,

Though late the hour, and dark the way, ere this
Hath measured half the distance

Imo. (*throwing herself vehemently on her knees.*)
Thank God, thank God—Heaven bless the gallant
knights!

Then he is safe until the morning's dawn.

Enter Page.

Imo. Speak—who art thou?

Page. Dost thou not know me, lady?

Imo. Well, well, I reckon not—wherefore art thou
come?

Page. So fierce the mountain-stream comes roaring
down,

The rivulet that bathes the convent walls

Is now a foaming flood—upon its brink

Thy lord and his small train do stand appalled—

With torch and bell from their high battlements

The monks do summon to the pass in vain;

He must return to-night.

Imo. 'Tis false, he must not—Oh, I shall run mad—
Go thou, and watch upon the turret's height—(*to Clo-*
tilda)

The flood must fall—the bright moon must shine forth;

Go, go and tell me so—why stayest thou here (*to page*)

Begone, and do not heed, and do not watch me.

[*Exit page.*]

I've lost the courage of mine innocence,

And dare not have the courage of despair—

The evil strength that gave temptation danger,

Yet cannot give remorse its energy.

Enter Clotilda.

Clot. The night is calm and clear, and o'er the plain
Nor arms do glimmer on my straining sight,
Nor through the stilly air, did horseman's tramp
Ring in faint echo from the hollow hill,
Though my fixed ear did list to giddiness—
Be comforted, he must have passed the stream—

Imo. Yea, I am comforted, 'tis blessed comfort—
He must have passed the stream—Oh pitying Heaven,
Accept these tears, these are not sinful tears—
Tell me again that he will not return.

Clot. I soothly say, he must have passed the stream.
(The horn is heard without, announcing Aldobrand's return.)

Clot. 'Tis Aldobrand, he's lost—we all are lost—
(without)

Imo. Now Heaven have mercy on thy soul, my
husband,
For man hath none—Is there no hope—no help?—
*(Looking towards the door, across which the band of
Bertram march silently and range themselves)*
None, none—his gathering band are dark around me—
I will make one last effort for their mercy—
If they be human, they will listen to me—
*(Rushing towards them, they step forward and point
their swords to resist her.)*

Oh, there is nothing merciful in their looks;
Oh, there is nothing human in their hearts;
They are not men—Hell hath sent up its devils.
There is no hope—I'll hear his dying groan—

I'll hear his last cry for that help that comes not—
I'll hear him call upon his wife and child—
I will not hear it.---(*stopping her ears.*)
Oh that my tightened heart had breath for prayer—
Mercy, oh mercy, Bertram.

(*Another horn heard without, she starts and staggers towards the door ;---a noise of swords within.*)

Ald. (*within*) Off, villain, off—

Ber. Villain, to thy soul—for I am Bertram.

(*Aldobrand retreating before Bertram, rushes on the stage, and falls at Imogene's feet.*)

Ald. Let me die at her feet, my wife, my wife—
Wilt thou not staunch the life-blood streaming from
me ?

Wilt thou not look at me ?—Oh save my boy (*dies*).

(*Imogene at the name of her son, rushes off ;—*
Bertram stands over the body holding the dagger
with his eyes fixed on it ;—The band fill up the back.

The curtain drops.

End of Fourth Act.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Chapel in the Convent of St. Anselm, the shrine splendidly illuminated and decorated. The Prior rising from before the altar.

Enter 1st Monk.

“ *Monk.* How gay and glorious doth our temple seem
“ Look round thee, father.

“ *Prior.* I feel no joy like that the faithful feel,
“ Viewing the glories of their holy place ;
“ An horror of great darkness is upon me,
“ A fearful dread hath overwhelmed me.

“ *Monk.* Wherefore ?

“ *Prior.* As at the shrine I knelt but now in prayer,
“ Nor sleep, nor waking, but a horrible vision
“ Fell on my tranced spirit, and I dreamed—
“ On the dark mountains was the vision wrought,
“ Of mist, and moonlight, mingling fitfully—
“ A brinded wolf did tear a struggling lion
“ While the cowed lioness stood trembling by—
“ I wist not what it meant, but in mine agony,
“ I prayed to be released, and as I woke
“ The echoes gave me back my slumbering cries—

“ *Monk.* 'Tis a good dream, and bodeeth something
good.—

“ *Prior*. How sayest thou, good ?

“ *Monk*. I dreamed it on that night

“ Lord Aldobrand did from his castle come,

“ And blessed days of peace have followed it.—

“ *Prior*. Heaven grant they may !

“ *Monk*. Lo, where the knights approach.

Enter the Knights in solemn procession with the consecrated banner.

The Prior advances to meet them.

Prior. Hail ! champions of the church and of the
land,

The banner of our holy saint in fight

Full bravely have ye borne, and scatheless back,

From unblest weapon and from arm unholy,

Restored it to the power whose might struck for you—

The Music commences, the Knights and Monks advance in procession, the Prior bearing the banner, which he has received from the principal Knight.

Hymn.

Guardian of the good and brave

Their banner o’er thy shrine we wave—

Monk, who counts the midnight bead—

Knight, who spurs the battle steed,—

He, who dies ’mid clarion’s swelling

He, who dies ’mid requiem’s knelling—

Alike thy care, whose grace is shed

On cowed scalp and helmed head—

Thy temple of the rock and flood

For ages ’mid their wrath has stood—

Thy midnight bell, through storm and calm

Hath shed on listening ear its balm.—

(The Hymn is interrupted by 3d Monk rushing in distractedly.)

3d Monk. Forbear—fear—

Prior Why comest thou thus with voice of desperate fear,

Breaking upon our solemn ceremony?

3d Monk. Despair is round our walls, a wailing spirit

Yea, the mixt wailings of the infernal host

Burst deafeningly amid the shuddering blast—

No earthly lip might utterance give to such—

Prior. Thou'rt wild with watching, fear and loneliness,

In thy sole turret that o'erhangs the flood.

Of winds and waves, the strangely-mingled sounds

Ride heavily the night-wind's hollow sweep,

Mocking the sounds of human lamentation—

3d Monk. Hush, look, it comes again (*a scream*)

Prior. Defend us, heaven,

'Twas horrible indeed—'tis in our walls—

Ha, through the cloister there doth something glide

That seems in truth not earthly—

Imogene rushes in with her child, her hair dishevelled, her dress stained with blood.

Imo. Save me—save me—

Prior. Save thee, from what?

Imo. From earth, and heaven, and hell,

All, all are armed, and rushing in pursuit—

Prior. Monks and knights gathering around, and speaking together.

All. Who—what—what hath befallen thee? Speak.

Imo. Oh wait not here to speak, but fly to save him,

For he lies low upon the bloody ground—

Knight. She speaks in madness, ask the frightened boy,

Hath aught befallen his father?—

Imo. Ask him not—

He hath no father—we have murdered him—

Traitress and murderer—we have murdered him—

They'll not believe me for mine agony—

Is not his very blood upon my raiment?

Reeks not the charnel-stream of murder from me?

Prior and Monks vehemently. Impossible.

Imo. Aye, heaven and earth do cry, impossible,
The shuddering angels round th' eternal throne,
Vailing themselves in glory, shriek impossible,
But hell doth know it true—

Prior. (*advancing to her solemnly.*)

Spirits of madness, that possess this woman

Depart I charge you, trouble her no more,

Till she do answer to mine adjuration—

Who did the deed?

Imogene sinks gradually from his fixed eye, till
hiding her face, she falls on the ground in silence.

Knight. I do believe it, horrid as it seems—

1st Monk. I'd not believe her words, I do her
silence.

Prior. (*who has fallen back in horror into the
arms of the monks, rushes forward*)

Oh! draw your swords, brave knights, and sheathe
them not—

“Slack not to wield the sword of Aldobrand,

Arise, pursue, avenge, exterminate

“With all the implements of mortal might,

“And all the thunders of the church’s curse”—

Exeunt tumultuously knights, monks, and attendants, the prior is following them, Imogene still kneeling grasps him by the robe.

Prior. (With mixt emotion, turning on her)

Thou art a wretch, I did so love and honour thee—

Thou’st broke mine aged heart—that look again—

Woman, let go thy withering hold—

Imo. I dare not—

I have no hold but upon heaven and thee.

Prior. (tearing himself from her)

I go, yet ere mine aged feet do bear me

To the dark chase of that fell beast of blood—

Hear thou, and—hope not—if by word or deed

Yea, by invisible thought, unuttered wish

Thou hast been ministrant to this horrid act—

With full collected force of malediction

I do pronounce unto thy soul—despair— [Exit.

Imo. (looking round on the chapel, after a long pause)

‘They’ve left me—all things leave me—all things
human—

Follower and friend—last went the man of God—

The last—but yet he went—

*Child.———*I will not leave thee—

Imo. My son, my son, was that thy voice—

When heaven and angels, earth and earthly things

Do leave the guilty in their guiltiness—
A cherub's voice doth whisper in a child's.
There is a shrine within thy little heart
Where I will hide, nor hear the trump of doom—

Child. Dear mother, take me home—

Imo. Thou hast no home—

She, whom thou callest mother left thee none—
We're hunted from mankind—(*sinking down*)
Here will we lie in darkness down together,
And sleep a dreamless sleep—what form is that—
Why have they laid him there? (*recoiling*)
Plain in the gloomy depth he lies before me
The cold blue wound whence blood hath ceased to
flow,

The stormy clenching of the bared teeth—
The gory socket that the balls have burst from—
I see them all—(*shrieking*)
It moves—it moves—it rises—it comes on me—
Twill break th' eternal silence of the grave—
'Twill wind me in its creaking marrowless arms.
Hold up thy hands to it, it was thy father—
Ah, it would have thee too, off—save me—off—

(*Rushes out with the child.*)

Scene changes to the Castle—Prior enters alone—

Prior. His halls are desolate—the lonely walls
Echo my single tread—through the long galleries—
The hurrying knights can trace nor friend nor foe—
The murderer hath escaped—the saints forgive me,
I feel mine heart of weakness is come back,
Almost I wish he had—ha, here is blood—

Mine ebbing spirits lacked this stirring impulse—

Ho—haste ye here—the shedder must be near—

[Enter the knights, monks, &c. supporting Clotilda.]

Knight. We found this trembling maid, alone,
concealed—

Prior. Speak—tell of Bertram—of thy lord—the
vassals—

Clot. Oh, give me breath, for I am weak with fear—
Short was the bloody conflict of the night—
The few remaining vassals fled in fear—
The bandits loaded with the castle's spoil—
Are gone—I saw them issue from the walls—
But yet I dared not venture forth, while Bertram—

All. Go on—go on—

Clot. He bore the murdered body—
Alone into yon chamber *[pointing]*
I heard the heavy weight trail after him—
I heard his bloody hands make fast the door—
There hath he sat in dread society,
The corse and murderer are there together.

(The Knights draw their swords, and rush towards the door.)

Prior. *(interposing)* Hold, champions hold, this
warfare is for me.

The arm of flesh were powerless on him now—

Hark how the faltering voice of feeble age

Shall bow him to its bidding. Ho, come forth

[striking the door.]

Thou man of blood, come forth, thy doom awaits thee.

[Bertram opens the door, and advances slowly, his dress is stained with blood, and he grasps the hilt of a dagger in his hand—his look is so marked and grand, that the knights, &c. make room for him, and he advances to the front of the stage untouched.]

All. Who art thou?

Ber. I am the murderer—Wherefore are ye come?—

Prior.—This majesty of guilt doth awe my spirit—
Is it th' embodied fiend who tempted him
Sublime in guilt?

Ber. Marvel not at me—Wist ye whence I come?
The tomb—where dwell the dead—and I dwelt with
him—

Till sense of life dissolved away within me—

(Looking round ghastlily,)

I am amazed to see ye living men,
I deemed that when I struck the final blow
Mankind expired, and we were left alone,
The corse and I were left alone together,
The only tenants of a blasted world
Dispeopled for my punishment, and changed
Into a penal orb of desolation—

Prior. Advance and bind him, are ye men and
armed?—

What, must this palsied hand be first on him?—
Advance, and seize him, ere his voice of blasphemy
Shall pile the roof in ruins o'er our heads—

Bar.—Advance, and seize me, ye who smile at
blood—

For every drop of mine a life shall pay—

I'm naked, famished, faint, my brand is broken—

Hush, mailed champions, on the helpless Bertram—

(They sink back)

Now prove what fell resistance I shall make.

(Throws down the hilt of his dagger.)

There—bind mine arms—if ye do list to bind them—

I came to yield—but not to be subdued—

Prior. Oh thou, who o'er thy stormy grandeur
flingest

A struggling beam that dazzles, awes, and vanishes—

Thou, who dost blend our wonder with our curses—

Why didst thou this?

Ber. He wronged me, and I slew him—

To man but thee I ne'er had said even this---

To man but thee, I ne'er shall utter more—

Now speed ye swift from questioning to death—

(They surround him.)

One prayer, my executioners, not conquerors---

Be most ingenious in your cruelty---

Let rack and pincer do their full work on me---

'Twill rouse me from that dread unnatural sleep,

In which my soul hath dreamt its dreams of agony---

This is my prayer, ye'll not refuse it to me---

(As they are leading him off, the prior lays hold of him)

Prior. Yet bend thy steeled sinews, bend and pray—

The corse of him thou'st murdered, lies within—

(A long pause)

Ber. I have offended Heaven, but will not mock
it—

Spare me your racks and pincers, spare me words.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A dark Wood, in the back Scene a Cavern, Rocks and Precipices above.—Imogene comes forward.

Imo. (*Sighing heavily after a long pause.*)
If I could waft away this low-hung mist
That darkens o'er my brow—
If I could but unbind this burning band
That tightens round my heart—
——— Or night or morning is it?
I wist not which, a dull and dismal twilight
Pervading all things, and confounding all things,
Doth hover o'er my senses and my soul—

[*Comes forward shuddering.*

The moon shines on me, but it doth not light me;
The surge glides past me, but it breathes not on me.
My child, my child, where art thou; come to me—
I know thou hidest thyself for sport to mock me—
Yet come---for I am scared with loneliness—
I'll call on thee no more, lo, there he glides—
And there, and there—he flies from me—he laughs—
I'll sing thee songs the church-yard spirits taught me—
I'll sit all night on the grey tombs with thee,
So thou wilt turn to me—he's gone—he's gone.

Enter Clotilda, Prior and Monks surrounding.

Clo. She's here—she's here—and is it thus I see
her?

Prior. All-pitying Heaven—release her from this
misery.

Imo. Away, unhand me, ye are executioners—
I know your horrible errand—who hath sent you?
This is false Bertram's doing—God—oh, God,
How I did love—and how am I requited—
Well, well, accuse me of what crime you will,
I ne'er was guilty of not loving thee—
Oh, spare the torture—and I will confess—
Nay, now there heeds it not—his look's enough—
That smile hath keener edge than many daggers.

[She sinks into Clotilda's arms.]

Clo. How could this wasted form sustain the toils—
Bearing her helpless child.

Imo. (starting up)
I was a mother—'twas my child I bore—
The murderer hung upon my flying steps—
The winds with all their speed had failed to match me.
Oh! how we laughed to see the baffled fiend
Stamp on the shore, and grind his iron teeth—
While safe and far, I braved the wave triumphant,
And shook my dripping locks like trophied banner.
I was a mother then.

Prior. Where is thy child?

*Clo. (Pointing to the cave into which she has
looked)*

Oh, he lies cold within his cavern-tomb—
Why dost thou urge her with the horrid theme?

Prior. It was to wake one living chord o' th'
heart,
And I will try—though mine own breaks at it—
Where is thy child?

Imo. (with a frantic laugh)

The forest fiend hath snatched him—

He rides the night-mare through the wizard woods.

Prior. Hopeless and dark—even the last spark
extinct.

Enter 3d Monk hastily.

Monk. Bertram—the prisoner Bertram—

Prior. ——— Hush—thou'lt kill her—

Haste thee, Clotilda,—holy brethren, haste;

Remove her hence—aye, even to that sad shelter—

[*Pointing to the cave.*

I see the approaching torches of the guard,

Flash their red light athwart the forest's shade—

Bear her away—oh my weak eye doth fail

Amid these horrors——

[*Imogene is torn to the cave, the Prior follows.*

Manet last Monk—Enter a Knight.

“ *Knight.* Where is the prior?

“ *Monk.* In yonder cave he bides,

“ And here he wills us wait, for 'tis his purpose

“ Once more to parley with that wretched man:

“ How fares he now?

“ *Knight.* As one whose pride of soul

“ Bears him up singly in this terrible hour—

“ His step is firm—his eye is fixed—

“ Nor menace, nor reviling, prayers, nor curses

“ Can win an answer from his closed lips—

“ It pities me—for he is brave—most brave—

“ *Monk.* Pity him not.

“ *Knight.* Hush—lo, he comes——

[A gleam of torch-light falls on the rocks, Bertram, Knights, and Monks, are seen winding down the precipices, the clank of Bertram's chains the only sound heard. They enter, Bertram is between two Monks, who bear torches.]

1st Monk. Leave him with us, and seek the Prior,
I pray you.

Knight. (aside to Monk)

He yet may try escape. We'll watch concealed.

[Exeunt all but Bertram and the two Monks.]

1st Monk. Brief rest is here allowed thee—murderer, pause—

How fearful was our footing on those cliffs,
Where time had worn those steep and rocky steps—
I counted them to thee as we descended,
But thou for pride wast dumb—

Ber. I heard thee not—

2d Monk. Look round thee, murderer, drear thy
resting place—

This is thy latest stage—survey it well—

Lo, as I wave my dimmed torch aloft,
Yon precipice crag seems as if every tread
(Yea, echoed impulse of the passing foot)
Would loose its weight to topple o'er our heads—
Those cavities hollowed by the hand of wrath—
Those deepening gulfs, have they no horrible tenant?
Dare thine eye scan that spectred vacancy?

Ber. I do not mark the things thou tell'st me of.—

1st Monk. Wretch, if thy fear no spectred inmate
shapes---

Ber. (starting from his trance)

Cease, triflers, would you have *me* feel remorse?
Leave me alone---nor cell, nor chain, nor dungeon,
Speaks to the murderer with the voice of solitude.

1st Monk. Thou sayest true---

In cruelty of mercy will we leave thee---

[Exeunt Monks.]

Ber. If they would go in truth---but what avails it?

*[He meditates in gloomy reflection for some minutes,
and his countenance slowly relaxes from its stern
expression.]*

*[The prior enters unobserved, and stands opposite
him in an attitude of supplication, Bertram resumes
his sternness.]*

—*Ber.* Why art thou here?---There was an hovering
angel

Just lighting on my heart---and thou hast scared it---

Prior. Yea, rather, with my prayers I'll woo it back.
In very pity of thy soul I come
To weep upon that heart I cannot soften---

[A long pause.]

Oh! thou art on the verge of awful death---
Think of the moment, when the veiling scarf
That binds thine eyes, shall shut out earth for ever---
When in thy dizzy ear, hurtles the groan
Of those who see the smiting hand upreared,
Thou canst but feel---that moment comes apace---

[Bertram smiles.]

But terrors move in thee a horrid joy,
And thou art hardened by habitual danger
Beyond the sense of aught but pride in death.

[Bertram turns away.]

Can I not move thee by one power in nature?
There have been those whom Heaven hath failed to
move,
Yet moved they were by tears of kneeling age.

[*Kneels.*

I wave all pride of ghostly power o'er thee--
I lift no cross, I count no bead before thee--
By the locked agony of these withered hands,
By these white hairs, such as thy father bore,
(Whom thou couldst ne'er see prostrate in the dust)
With toil to seek thee here my limbs do fail,
Send me not broken-hearted back again--
Yield, and relent, Bertram, my son, my son (*weeping*)
(*Looking up eagerly.*)

Did not a gracious drop bedew thine eye?

Ber. Perchance a tear had fallen, hadst thou not
marked it.

Prior. (*rising with dignity.*)
Obdurate soul--then perish in thy pride--
Hear in my voice thy parting angel speak,
Repent--and be forgiven--

(*Bertram turns towards him in strong emotion, when
a shriek is heard from the cavern, Bertram stands
fixed in horror.*)

Prior. (*stretching out his hands towards the ca-
vern.*)

Plead *thou* for me--thou, whose wild voice of horror,
Has pierced the heart my prayers have failed to
touch--

Ber. (*wildly*) What voice was that—yet do not
dare to tell me,

Name not her name, I charge thee.

Prior. Imogine—

A maniac through these shuddering woods she wanders,

But in her madness never cursed thy name.

(*Bertram attempts to rush towards the cave, but stands stupified on hearing a shriek from the cavern. Imogine rushes from it in distraction, bursting from the arms of Clotilda, the Monks and Knights follow, and remain in the back ground.*)

Imo. Away, away, away, no wife—no mother—

(*She rushes forward till she meets Bertram, who stands in speechless horror.*)

Imo. Give me my husband, give me back my child—

Nay, give me back myself—

They say I'm mad, but yet I know thee well—

Look on me—They would bind these wasted limbs—

I ask but death—death from thy hand—*that hand can deal death well*—and yet thou wilt not give it.

Ber. (*gazing on her for a moment, then rushing to the prior, and sinking at his feet.*)

Who hath done this? Where are the racks I hoped for?

Am I not weak? am I not humbled now?

(*Groveling at the Prior's feet, and then turning to the Knights.*)

Hast thou no curse to blast---no curse for me---

Is there no hand to pierce a soldier's heart?

Is there no foot to crush a felon's neck?

Imo. (Raising herself at the sound of his voice.)

Bertram.

(He rushes towards her, and first repeats Imogene feebly, as he approaches, he utters her name again passionately, but as he draws nearer and sees her look of madness and desperation, he repeats it once more in despair, and does not dare to approach her, till he perceives her falling into Clotilda's arms, and catches her in his.)

Imo. Have I deserved this of thee?—(she dies slowly, with her eyes fixed on Bertram, who continues to gaze on her unconscious of her having expired.)

Prior. 'Tis past---remove him from the corse---

(The Knights and Monks advance, he waves them off with one hand still supporting the body.)

Prior. (to the Monks)---Brethren, remove the corse---

Ber. She is not dead---(starting up.)

She must not, shall not die, till she forgives me---

Speak---speak to me---(*kneeling to the corse*)

(Turning to the Monks)---Yes---she will speak anon---

(A long pause, he drops the corse.)

She speaks no more---Why do ye gaze on me---

I loved her, yea, I love, in death I loved her---

I killed her---but---I loved her---

What arm shall loose the grasp of love and death?

(The Knights and Monks surround, and attempt to tear him from the body, he snatches a sword from one of the Knights, who retreats in terror, as it is pointed towards him. Bertram resuming all his former previous sternness, bursts into a disdainful laugh.)

Ber. Thee—against thee—oh, thou art safe—thou worm——

Bertram hath but one fatal foe on earth——

And *he is here*——(*stabs himself.*)

Prior. (*rushes forward.*) He dies, he dies.

Ber. (*struggling with the agonies of death.*)

I know thee holy Prior—I know ye, brethern

Lift up your holy hands in charity.

(With a burst of wild exultation.)

I died no felon death——

A warrior's weapon freed a warrior's soul——

THE END

EPILOGUE,

Written by the Hon. George Lamb.

SPOKEN BY MISS KELLY.

SAY, for our Author, whose proud hopes aspire,
To sound the Tragic Bard's neglected lyre;
Say, for our novice, who at once the weight,
Bears of her own and of the Poet's fate,
Oh say, what hope? 'Tis mine with doubt and fear
In this dread hour to ask your judgment here;
Yet, for my sake, before your sentence, stay,
And hear me draw one moral from the play.

Enough for IMOGINE the tears ye gave her;
I come to say one word in BERTRAM's favour.—
BERTRAM! ye cry, a ruthless blood-stain'd rover!!
He was—but also was the truest lover:
And, faith! like cases that we daily view,
All might have prosper'd, had the fair been true.

Man, while he loves, is never quite deprav'd,
And woman's triumph, is a lover sav'd.
The branded wretch, whose callous feelings court
Crime for his glory, and disgrace for sport;
If in his breast love claims the smallest part,
If still he values one fond female heart,
From that one seed, that ling'ring spark, may grow
Pride's noblest flow'r, and virtue's purest glow:
Let but that heart—dear female lead with care
To honour's path and cheer his progress there,

And proud, though haply, sad regret occurs
At all his guilt, think all his virtue hers.

The fair not always view with fav'ring eyes
The very virtuous or extremely wise ;
But, odd it seems, will sometimes rather take
Want with the spendthrift, riot with the rake.
“ None, howe'er vitious, find all women froward,
“ None—did I say? none, save the sot and coward.”
The reason's plain, the good need nought to warm them,
And we must love the wicked to reform them.

“ Yet we some wives, some sweethearts, may discover,
“ Almost no better than the spouse or lover ;
“ Nought can to peace the busy female charm,
“ And if she can't do good, she must do harm—
“ Can chill warm youth, yet fails to warm chill age,
“ Makes sages fools, but rarely makes fools sage ;
“ Some women, like all men, have tastes for evil,
“ And, where they should be angels, play the devil.

Still woman draws new power, new empire still
From every blessing and from every ill.
Vice on her bosom lulls remorseful care,
And virtue hopes congenial virtue there.
Still she most hides the strength that most subdues,
To gain each end its opposite pursues ;
Lures by neglect, advances by delay,
And gains command by swearing to obey.

Women have pow'r too in these gallant days,
(So Authors think) of recommending plays.
The prologue prosed, ere the play is known,
Rugged and dull as the male speaker's tone ;
When the scene's done, and many a fault provokes you,
Women and Epilogue come forth to coax you.
Yet dare I plead, who in this wond'rous age,
Can only speak and walk upon the stage,—

Who know nor carte, nor tierce, nor fencing odds,
Nor by a rope's assistance seek the Gods !
Yes, I will dare ; for if ye're pleased to-night,
The genuine drama re-asserts its right.

BERTRAM in crime elate, of murder proud,
Ruthless to man, to woman's accents bow'd ;
Be mov'd like him, your sterner thoughts resign
At woman's voice, and let that voice be mine !

Lines between the " inverted commas " are omitted in speaking.

Who know not crime, nor vice, nor fencing odd;
Nor by a rope's assistance seek the Gods!
Yes, I will share; for it were pleased to-night,
The genuine human to needs its right.

HETMAN in crime state, of murder proud,
Forthless to man, to woman's accents bow'd;
He mov'd like him, your sister through the region
At woman's voice, and let that voice be mine!

I have between the "inserted commas" are omitted in speaking.

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Still woman draws new power, new empire still
From every blessing and from every ill.
Vice on her bosom lulls remorseful care,
And virtue hopes congenial virtue there.
Still she most hides the strength that most subdues,
To gain each end its opposite pursues;
Lures by neglect, advances by delay,
And gains command by swearing to obey.

Women have pow'r too in these gallant days,
(So Authors think) of recommending plays.
The prologue prosed, ere the play is known,
Rugged and dull as the male speaker's tone;
When the scene's done, and many a fault provokes you,
Women and Epilogue come forth to coax you.
Yet dare I plead, who in this wond'rous age,
Can only speak and walk upon the stage,—

Who know nor carte, nor tierce, nor fencing odds,
Nor by a rope's assistance seek the Gods !
Yes, I will dare ; for if ye're pleased to-night,
The genuine drama re-asserts its right.

BERTRAM in crime elate, of murder proud,
Ruthless to man, to woman's accents bow'd ;
Be mov'd like him, your sterner thoughts resign
At woman's voice, and let that voice be mine !

Lines between the " inverted commas " are omitted in speaking.

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Who know not care, nor fierce, nor flaring odds,

Nor by a rope's assistance seek the Gods!

Yet, I will dare; for if he pleased to-night,

The genuine drama re-assume its right.

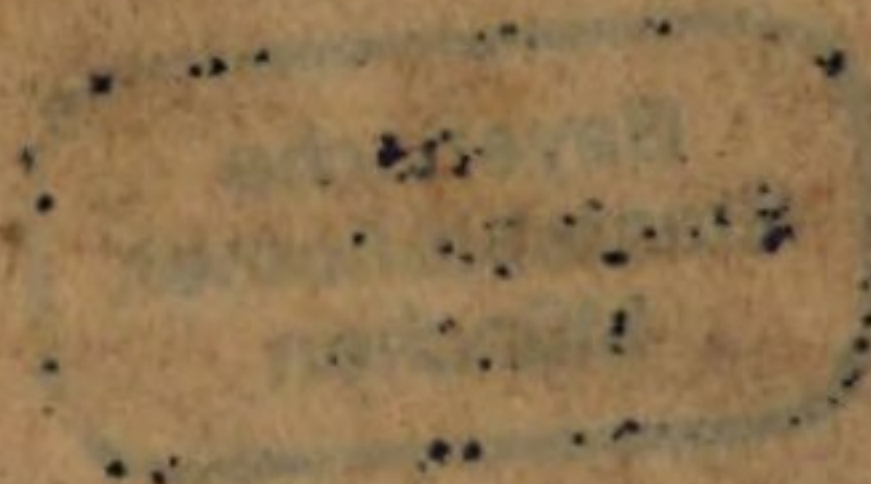
There's an in kind state, of mind and proud,

Unfathomable to man, to woman's accents bow'd;

The magic of his form, your sterner thoughts resign

To woman's voice, and let that voice be mine!

Lines between the "Invites" cannot be called in question.



Printed by W. Crowne,
Northumberland Street, Strand.

Maturin, Charles Robert,

Bertram; or the castle of St. Aldobrand a tragedy, in 5 acts

London 1816

Bibl.Mont. 863

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10713985-5